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***EMERGENCY WELFARE SERVICES
FOR AIKEN COUNTY***

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STATE DOCUMENTS

The South Carolina Emergency Welfare Service (EWS) is an organization made up of state and county level personnel, facilities and resources of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education and the County School System with their personnel, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. During a disaster, EWS provides for basic human needs such as shelter, food, clothing, information and counseling. EWS is authorized by SC law and by Executive Order 11490¹.

As stated in the Aiken County Emergency Operations Plan,² the mission of Aiken County EWS, during a disaster is to provide emergency services needed by people who have suffered and for those who have been relocated as a result of a disaster or an impending disaster. Aiken County is part of the Southern Coastal Conglomerate of the S. C. State Hurricane Plan³. According to this plan, evacuees follow an evacuation route from Hilton Head and the Beaufort area to Aiken.

The Aiken County Dept. of Social Service (ACDSS) is the lead agency for mass care during a disaster and the Director is responsible for the coordination of all governmental and non-governmental agencies that comprise the EWS and provides staff in support of American Red Cross, as required. ACDSS provides emergency social services, and administers federal disaster relief program as authorized. On order of the Aiken County Government, the Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD) Coordinator activates the Emergency Operations Command (EOC). To coordinate disaster efforts, representatives of each county government department related to the disaster, law enforcement, emergency preparedness staff, and Emergency Welfare agencies are housed in the county complex annex in an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The coordinators of EPD and of EWS activate the EWS organizations. Requests for assistance are routed through the EOC. The county Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD) director is responsible for

¹ Annex K To Aiken County Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Welfare Services , April 1998, Authority, Page K-1, and South Carolina Department of Social Services, Emergency Welfare Services Policy and Procedures Manual, revision number 95-1, 4/01/95 Pages 2-3

² Annex K To Aiken County Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Welfare Services , April 1998, Mission, Page K-4

³ Emergency Preparedness Division ,South Carolina State Hurricane Plan, Plan Overview, July 1999, Pages 1-6

requesting that an appropriate shelter, or shelters, be opened when needed. Prior to a disaster, the American Red Cross (ARC) is responsible for surveying shelters designated by the county EPD Director. ARC is also responsible, for negotiating written agreements with county school districts and owners of other facilities designated as shelters, for managing and operation^M shelters that are opened for any emergency or disaster, for recruiting volunteers from the local community, and providing Mass Care (shelter management) training. The ACDSS Director must maintain enough DSS staff, who have received ARC shelter training, to ensure^{the} timely opening and operations of designated shelters in response to any emergency or disaster. The ACDSS Shelter Liaison ensures that staff is available to assist ARC in opening shelters within 4 hours of the word to do so and ensures continued staffing support as needed. ACDSS Shelter Liaisons are responsible for communicating shelter opening, closings and numbers of evacuees in the shelter, to the DSS representative in the Emergency Operations Command (EOC) or the DSS Office if the EOC is not operational. This information is communicated to the State communications room and is utilized at the state level.

During a recent emergency situation, the largest peacetime evacuation in the United States took place. Aiken County is located on the western most border of South Carolina. In addition to evacuees from the South Carolina coast, evacuees were forced from Georgia and Florida into the Aiken area. It became very apparent that the current evacuation plan was not sufficient for this large-scale evacuation. Some evacuees were in their cars for hours. Traffic was not moving and information about shelters and basic emergency services was not readily available. The State Hurricane Plan designated one high school for the initial shelter. The two schools that were designated to be opened next were two elementary schools. These elementary schools had no generators. If the local area lost power, these shelters would be without power. There was a deviation from the State Hurricane plan to accommodate for these discrepancies. The Aiken County Government did not open the EOC and there was lack of communication between agencies. The Red Cross Director had been with the agency for less than two weeks and the EPD Director had been in his position for less than two months. Both of these directors were not in agreement regarding procedures for shelter operations.

Subsequent EWS meetings have been held to correct local problems. Recommendations are being sent to the State Emergency Preparedness Division regarding traffic pattern changes, using local radio stations to provide information to evacuees during the emergency and designating more appropriate shelters. This will allow changes to be made to the SC State Hurricane Plan to correct some of the shortfalls that were discovered during the last emergency. Operational and organizational structure changes have been made within the agency to accommodate for short falls. This information has been shared with all EWS agencies and EPD.

There were some problems internally and externally that became apparent during this emergency. Aiken County DSS had four persons designated for initial call out as representatives to the EOC and as a Shelter Liaison. A personnel roster, with contact information, and an initial schedule for 24-hour staffing of one Red Cross Shelter and one Special Needs Shelter was in place. ACDSS employees have been with the agency for sometime, have participated in past drills for various scenarios and have responded to past emergencies. During the recent emergency the first two representatives on the list were out of the geographic area, one was out of state and the other out of the area and unable to participate for the first day. The next person in line for initial contact was the Shelter Liaison. Duties fell to her that really did not fall within her realm of assigned duties. The call out list for personnel was set for one Red Cross Shelter and one Special Needs Shelter to be staffed. There was a need within 24 hours, to staff three Red Cross Shelters and one Special Needs Shelter. Training for line staff had been requested but had not been scheduled. Line staff had very little knowledge regarding their duties. Procedures for selecting and assigning personnel to specific duties were not clear. EOC was not activated and communication with other EWS agencies was limited. Contingency plans were not in place to deal with lack of communication with external agencies when EOC was not activated.

The goal of this project was to establish EWS internal procedures for Aiken County Department of Social Service staff. This also included a review of the roles of the Shelter Liaison, EOC Designee and personnel, operational plans and to research contingency plans for dealing with communication problems with external agencies when EOC is not open. The need for these changes were determined by information

derived from a survey of participants of the recent emergency and by an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of EOC Designees, the DSS Shelter Liaison, and the County Director. After this information was compiled, it was used to make operational and structural changes. This was achieved by December 3, 1999. An activation of EOC occurred on December 31, 1999, due to concerns about possible effects from computer problems at the turn of the century. The operational and structural procedures were tested at this time and feedback was requested. This information allowed changes to the plan for ongoing process improvements.

The question our agency sought to answer is, how can we best deliver emergency welfare services to the residents of South Carolina in a more effective and timely manner. We wanted to put internal procedures in place that would clarify work processes and improve services to internal and external customers. Clearly defined roles for personnel, the Shelter Liaison and EOC Designee were established. As a result of these changes, external customers can expect a quicker and more efficient response to their needs.

To determine factors that may have contributed to the problems, meetings were held with the County Director, the Shelter Liaison and the EOC Designees. Each member agreed it would be beneficial to develop a process improvement team to further define the problems and develop an action plan. This team was named the EWS Process Improvement Team. (EWS PIT)

Some of the perceived internal problems were:

- The roles of the Shelter Liaison, EOC Designee and personnel were not clear
- There were no designated backups for the Shelter Liaison, and EOC Designees.
- There were no procedures to determine how staff is chosen for each shift.
- No one knew what was the correct composition of staff on the initial call- out list and each shift.
- It was not clear if the shifts were too long or too short.
- Some staff was not clear about duties or their responsibilities at the shelters.
- Some communication problems to and from shelters were encountered.
- There was not a clear process to activate EWS within our agency

- There were no contingency plans to ensure communication with other EWS agencies if EOC was not activated.
- Staff was not sure how the services they offered affected their customers.

The EWS PIT had to decide the best method to determine solutions for the perceived internal problems. It was determined that most of the problems arose due to the decision not to activate the Emergency Operation Command during the emergency. Communications with EWS agencies and EPD was limited and sporadic. Key elements of the problems were laid out and an action plan was devised. This action plan stated that the team would develop a contingency plan to ensure communication with other EWS Agencies, if EOC was not activated. Team members would define the roles of the Shelter Liaison, EOC Designee and personnel. An internal activation plan would be devised. It was decided that, problems related directly to staff should be addressed in a survey of staff members that served in shelters, during the last emergency. The survey should seek to find answers to questions concerning how the initial call out list would be devised, how regular shift schedules would be decided, the length of the shift, the composition of staff on each shift, if they had training needs, and communication and shelter operation problems encountered. Employees would be asked to give personal accounts of interaction and observations of reactions from external customers. This included other EWS agencies and the evacuees.

A customer survey was completed and disseminated on November 11, 1999 to employees that served at the shelters or offered other assistance during the emergency. The survey results were accumulated and compiled on November 22, 1999. There was a 46% response. Copies of the results were sent to each of the employees that were surveyed, the EWS PIT and were posted on the information board in the agency.

On November 29, 1999 the EWS PIT met and reviewed the survey results. Using the information gained from the staff survey and input from supervisors, the EWS PIT moved forward to make some decisions about how to proceed.

- To answer questions about organizational structure, an organizational chart (see appendix 1) was developed. The roles were defined for the Shelter Liaison, EOC Designee and personnel.
- Backups for each position were designated. This would further clarify organizational structure.
- The consensus from the survey was that staffing of shelter and developing an initial call out list should be done on a voluntary basis first. If insufficient staff is obtained from a request for volunteers, appointments should be made to complete the schedule. It was agreed that this is the method that would be used for developing the call out list and also for the schedules that followed.
- The survey showed, almost unanimously, that staff wanted each shift to be composed of at least one supervisor per shift and two employees. The gender ratio should either be split or given no preference. As a result, schedules and initial call out list were composed. Two reserve staff members are listed on each schedule in case an employee can not serve their scheduled shift.
- Employees felt that each shift should be no longer than 8 hours. The new schedule consists of three 8-hour shifts a day, for each shelter.
- In regard to the training question. The survey of employees showed that most felt that they had adequate information to do their duties at the shelter but would like to have further training. Needed training was discussed and was scheduled with Red Cross.
- Communication problems ranged from lack of proper equipment assigned to the shelter, to poor communication across agency lines in reference to duties, roles, and responsibilities. A contingency plan (see appendix 3) was devised for communication with other agencies if the EOC was not activated. It was decided that in the event that EOC was not activated in the future during an emergency, the EWS Center would be activated and would operate at the ACDSS Office just as it would have at EOC. Pre-designated telephone numbers would be activated in the boardroom and the EWS Center would be staffed on a 24-hour basis until EWS was deactivated.
- To clarify the internal activation process, a flowchart (see appendix 2) was created to show the process for activation of EWS within our agency.

- Personal accounts of interaction with other agencies were not very positive due to a lack of information about roles and responsibilities across agency lines. The observed response from evacuees was overwhelmingly positive. The staff felt that evacuees were very appreciative, and wanted to offer their assistance to help other evacuees. Regular meetings with the other EWS agencies and Emergency Preparedness staff has improved the communication and clarified roles and responsibilities of each agency.

This information was sent to the staff and has been included in the monthly training sessions for each area.

On December 2, 1999, a rough draft of an internal plan was devised and sent to EWS PIT members for revisions. This plan included operational definitions, procedures that were derived from information obtained from the survey, a flow chart of the internal activation plan, the contingency plan, and an organizational chart.

The newly revised internal plan was submitted to the agency Senior Management for feedback and their revisions. Changes were made and then sent to each supervisor in the agency to be reviewed and discussed with his or her staff. A request for feedback was done and input was to be sent back by December 15, 1999. No changes were recommended.

EOC was activated on December 31, 1999 as a precaution to emergencies that might have arose from possible computer failures. These computer failures could have possibly resulted in loss of the ability to provide basic human needs. The new policies were implemented during the activation.

Employees were on standby status to serve in shelters from December 31 until January 3, 1999. The County Director served at EOC during the full activation on December 31, 1999. A two-hour call back list included staff that had volunteers to be on call for these four days, in each pre described role was in place. To prepare for a full activation of shelters, schedules and an updated roster of personnel were prepared. The flowchart allowed for a clearly defined activation plan. Communication plans were implemented.

Beepers were activated for each person on call that did not currently carry a beeper. Cell phones were allocated for each possible shelter. No major problems arose on New Years Eve and EOC was deactivated. Feedback was requested from the employees and a few minor changes in procedural definitions were made to the plan.

To implement this plan, the only added costs to these changes were for beepers to be activated and the cost for cell phones that may exceed the monthly-allocated airtime. Four beepers are held in reserve and only activated when an emergency occurs. The initial activation cost is \$5.00 per beeper and the monthly cost is \$7.00. Cell phones for shelters were identified from phones that are currently being used in program areas. Estimated costs for this would be less than \$100.00. Costs incurred during the emergency for excess cell phone charges and beepers are to be paid by administration. Few obstacles were encountered during the implementation of this plan. The only anticipated obstacle identified was that of keeping the staff trained due to turnover. Ongoing training schedules should overcome that barrier. If during future activations, difficulties arise, these procedures will establish a baseline to build on.

The County Director approved the plan. This plan is now agency policy and was disseminated to the staff on January 17, 2000. Supervisors included discussions of this policy change in their monthly in-service training with staff and copies will be shared in a scheduled meeting with the county Emergency Preparedness staff and the other EWS Agencies on Feb. 2, 2000.

We have met our goal with this project because the plan provides a clear understanding for all parties as to the activation process, roles each participant is expected to play and procedures to accomplish the mission at hand. This plan also allows for ongoing process improvement and training for staff. As a result of these changes, external customers will receive a quicker and more efficient response to their needs.

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South Carolina Department of Social Services, Emergency Welfare Services Policy and Procedures Manual, revision number 95-1, April 1995

Emergency Preparedness Division, South Carolina State Hurricane Plan, Plan Overview, July 1999

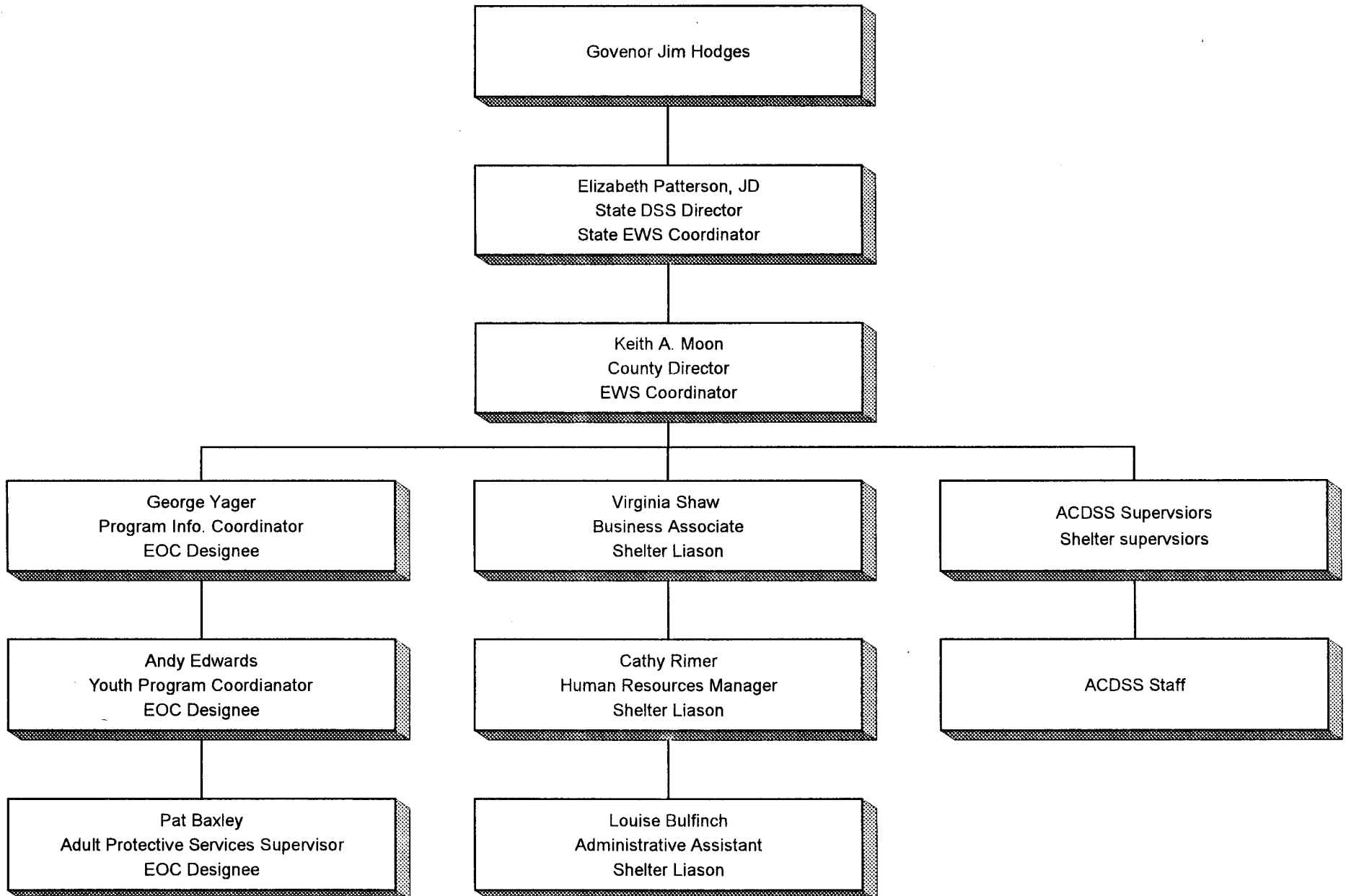
South Carolina Budget and Control Board, Center for Education, Quality and Assessment, Team Skills

South Carolina Budget and Control Board, Center for Education, Quality and Assessment, Measurement Lab

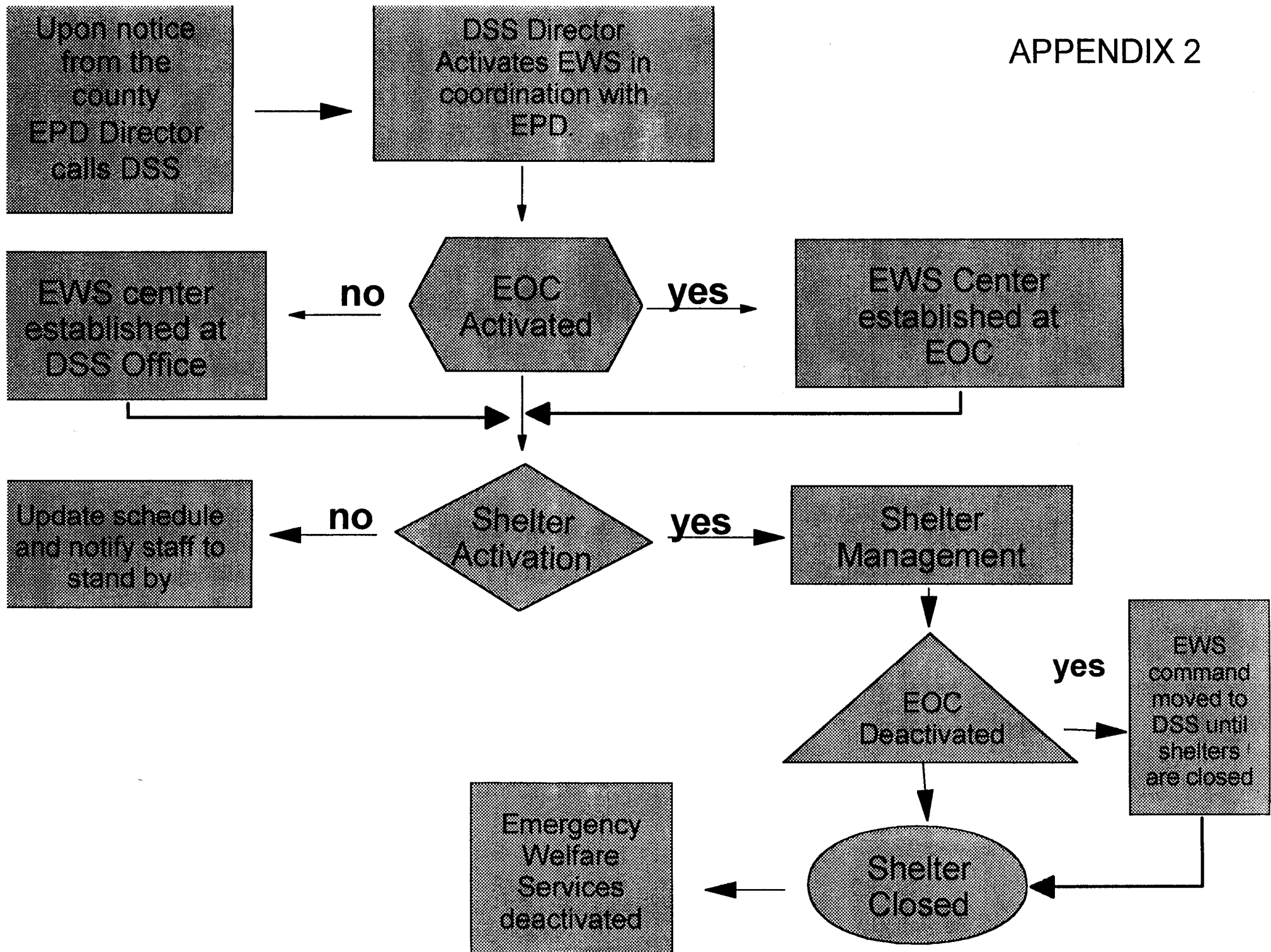
South Carolina Budget and Control Board, Center for Education, Quality and Assessment, The Managers Role in Planning

Emergency Welfare Services

APPENDIX 1

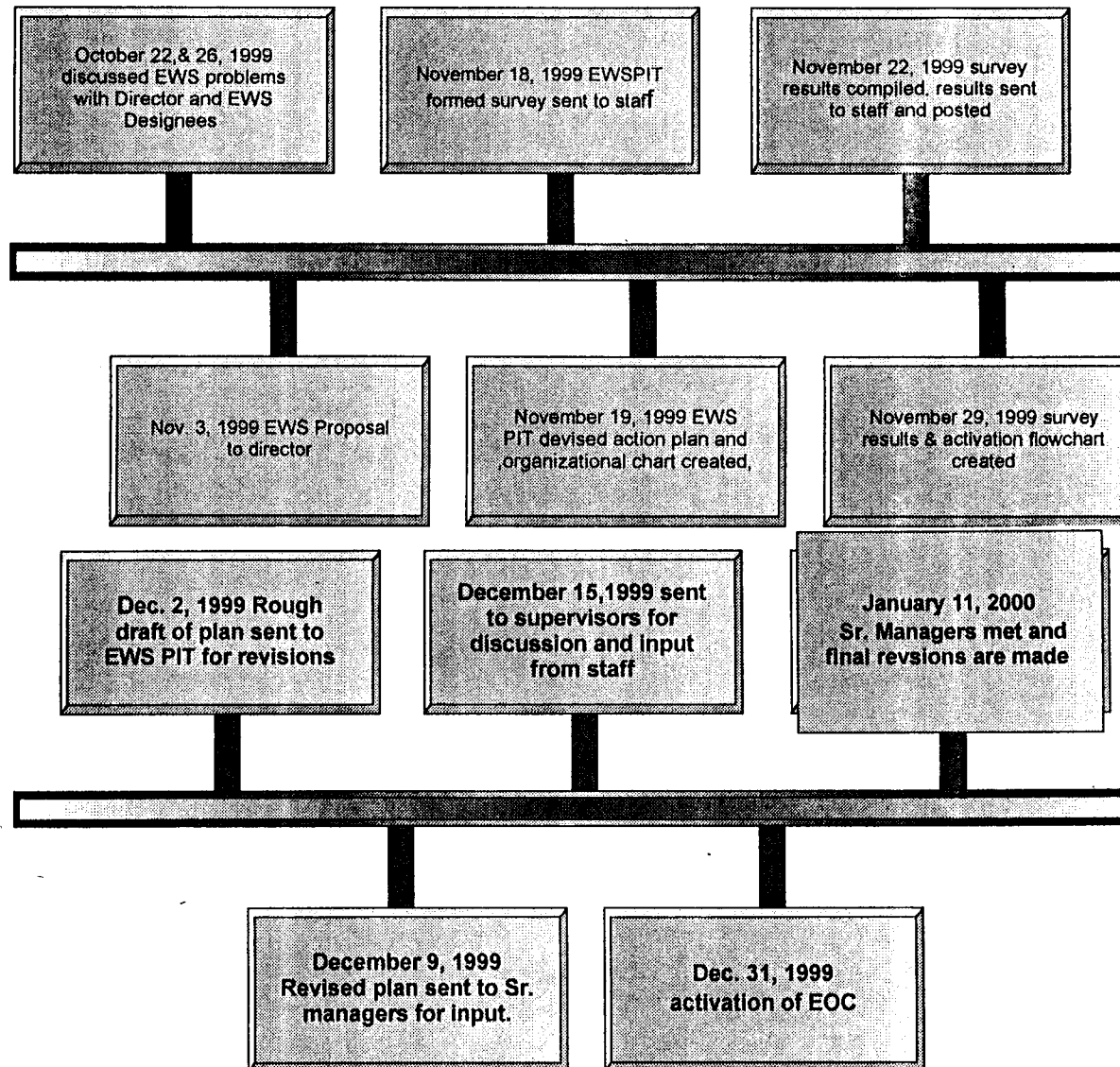


APPENDIX 2



EWS Project Plan Timeline

APPENDIX 3



Aiken County Department of Social Services Internal Operation Plan for Emergency Welfare Services

Purpose

To establish internal operations policy and procedures for Emergency Welfare Services before, during and after a disaster, whether natural, man-made or war.

Definitions

Emergency Welfare Service (EWS) - Organization composed of the Aiken County Department of Social Services, (ACDSS), and its personnel, facilities and resources at the state and county levels, the County School Districts and its personnel, facilities and resources; other State, County and Local governmental agencies; appropriate Federal agencies; and supporting private and religious organizations.

EWS Services- Provision for basic human needs required as a result of an emergency situation, e.g., shelter, food, clothing, information and referral, counseling etc. These services are provided by the Emergency Welfare Service organization.

Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD)- Coordinates, and leads the county emergency management program, enabling effective preparation for, and efficient response to, emergencies and disasters in order to save lives, reduce human suffering and reduce property loss. South Carolina State Laws 58-1 and 58-101 require contingency plans and implementing procedures for major hazards, such as hurricanes, led by the state and coordinated with counties that have the potential of being impacted.

Shelter Plan- The document setting forth the procedures how people are to be directed to the best available shelter as dictated by the situation. The plan identifies the number of shelters, their location and the requirement for shelter space.

Emergency Operation Center (EOC) – Organization composed of representatives of each county department and EWS members are assembled in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during an emergency. EOC is under the direction of the County Administrator. This allows direct

communications with all of the governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in the emergency.

Aiken County EWS Management Group The group composed of the Coordinator of EWS (County DSS Director), School District Superintendent, the School Lunch Supervisor, Executive Director of the Aiken County Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC), and the Commander of the Aiken County Salvation Army. These individuals or their alternates will be located in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) when the center is activated.

References

Annex K To Aiken County Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Welfare Service, April 1998,

South Carolina Department of Social Services, Emergency Welfare Services Policy and Procedures Manual, 1995 revision

South Carolina State Hurricane Plan, last revised July 1999

Organization

(See appendix 1, organizational chart)

The State Director of SCDSS is the State EWS Coordinator and is responsible to the Governor. The SCDSS director is represented in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)

The Aiken County DSS Director is the County Coordinator for EWS and is responsible for the coordination of all governmental and non-governmental agencies that comprise EWS organization.

Emergency Operation Center Designees - These designees represent the EWS coordinator in the county EOC. They staff EOC (when activated) on a 24-hour basis until it closes. If EOC is not activated during an emergency, or if EOC is subsequently closed before shelters are closed, EWS command will be moved to the appropriate DSS office within Aiken County. DSS Director and Designees will maintain 24-hour operation of EWS Center until

EWS is deactivated. Designees will be responsible for coordinating staff training as needed.

ACDSS Shelter Liaison- Schedules staffing of shelters by requesting volunteers and then in coordination with immediate supervisor, appoints staff as needed. Activates staff upon request from EWS Center. Provides back up at EWS Center as needed. Assigns beepers and cell phones. Revises initial call out list each June or as requested by DSS Director.

ACDSS Supervisors- Provides supervision of staff on each assigned shift at shelters and is responsible for reporting information in a timely manner to EOC Designee.

ACDSS Staff - Staffs shelters as mandated. Staff is responsible for the provision of all DSS Services, counseling, registration and inquiry, administration of State and Federal disaster relief programs (when authorized) and other services deemed necessary and appropriate by the EWS.

Contingency Plan if EOC is not activated:

- EWS Coordinator/ Designees will set up EWS Center in the boardroom of the Aiken County Dept. of Social Services located at 1410 Park Ave., SE, Aiken, SC.
- EWS Center will be staffed the same as EOC would be staffed if it had been activated. A 24-hour shift with the same personnel will be established.
- Communication with the shelters and other EWS Agencies will be done using pre-designated telephone numbers

Direction and Control

(See appendix 2, flowchart)

On request from the Aiken County Emergency Preparedness Director, the EWS Management Group will report to the county Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and will direct EWS operations from that location. If EOC is

not activated (see contingency plan) EWS will be established at DSS Office. EPD will determine the need for shelter activation in coordination with EWS. If it is determined that the shelters do not need to be opened at the present time, the EOC designee notifies the Shelter Liaison. The Shelter Liaison updates the schedule and notifies staff to stand by. If shelters are activated, EOC Designee notifies the Shelter Liaison of the location and time the shelters are requested to be opened.

ACDSS staff follows established policies and procedures for shelter operations. One supervisor will be assigned per shift and will be responsible for reporting information in a timely manner to EOC Designee. Staff is responsible for the provision of all DSS Services, counseling, registration and inquiry, administration of State and Federal disaster relief programs (when authorized) and other services deemed necessary and appropriate by the EWS. Staff will stay at the assigned shelter until they are relieved. Shifts will normally be 8 hours but may be extended if the need arises. Deactivation of a shelter is based on the attached guidelines from the State Hurricane plan, Shelter Management, of the State Annex pages 1-B-3 and 4. (Appendix 3)

Communication during shelter operations

Each shelter will be assigned a beeper and a cell phone for that shelter during the time of emergency. Reports to EOC Designee or EWS Center will be done by the shift supervisor on an hourly basis, unless otherwise instructed. This report will include a current count of evacuees in the shelter, the number of DSS employees on duty at that time and any needs not being met. Other information may be requested by EOC.

EWS Services Policy

EWS Services by ACDSS shall be rendered to any person in need of such services with no discrimination against any such person(s) because of race, religious creed, political beliefs or national origin.